

1608/5902.

THE
RIGHTS
OF THE
PEOPLE
TO
PETITION,
AND THE
REASONABLENESS of complying with such
PETITIONS:

IN A
Letter to a Leading Great Man.

A NEW EDITION.

Recommended to the Perusal of the LIVERY of
LONDON, the FREEHOLDERS, and all other
ELECTORS of GREAT BRITAIN.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. WILLIAMS, at No. 38, next the *Mitre*
Tavern in Fleet-Street. MDCCLXIX.

1608/5902.



To the Right Honourable

R----- W-----, Esq;

S I R,

THE following Papers, which are addressed to an anonymous *Leading Great Man*, cannot improperly be put into your hands, considering the important figure you have always made in Public Affairs. The warm and disinterested concern you have at all times shewn for your Country; especially the zeal with which you formerly opposed a corrupt and wicked Administration; must lead your countrymen, upon every

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every National Distress, to look to you: and the rather at this time, when the National Distress is as much greater, as your Power now is greater to remedy it.

They consider you not only able, but willing, to relieve the general Calamity; and ready to punish, with strictest justice, the Authors and Abettors of that calamity: which they take to be the first step towards removing their Grievances, and restoring Public Credit. These sentiments are now the *Voice of the People*; and that voice, 'tis not to be doubted, will be heard and complied with by you, considered both as a wise and a virtuous M——r. They know, that no indirect methods can be used by you, to protect criminals, who were wicked enough to raise themselves upon the ruin of their Country: they know, that instead of screening any such mighty offenders, you will exert your whole capacity, to bring
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to light any secrets of the *Conspirators*. They know, as you have clean hands yourself, you will industriously endeavour to punish those corrupt and mercenary wretches, who gave up the Public, that they might prey upon the Public. They know, therefore, that you will encourage and promote a compliance with the Sense of the Nation, expressed in this *dutiful and preceded Way of Petitions*.

This is their consolation in the midst of their Distress : whereas, had you been one of the *Parricides*; or had you shared underhand in any of the common plunder; had you since been advanced, to shelter any of the guilty, or given any reason to suspect it, thereby to prevent the public enquiry's taking effect; 'twould be a melancholy consideration to your countrymen : and instead of the present pleasure they feel, in knowing so wise, so honest, so uncorrupt a person

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person as yourself fills the post you enjoy ; they would then suffer all that uneasiness, which must follow from the contrary reflection : instead of seeing you continued, with great satisfaction, in your present high station, they would soon triumph over the disgrace of one, who was an Enemy to his County : for, a Guilty Great Man cannot long support himself amongst an Injured Free People. I am,

S I R,

Your humble Servant.

T H E



**THE
RIGHTS
OF THE
PEOPLE
TO
PETITION, &c.**

S I R,

SINCE you make so considerable a Figure in the H—e of C——s, and are for *weighty reasons* preferred to some of the chiefeft trusts; I know no other single person, to whom a subject, of the highest importance to the public, can be so properly addressed.

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I would nevertheless not be misunderstood, as if I supposed the Fate of Great Britain to depend on the influence of any one man, how great soever : for your part, you must certainly disdain such a fulsome compliment from servile-minded flatterers. Although we have been basely bereaved of our *Property*, the spirit of *Liberty* still remains, and will exert itself on worthy occasions : nor are we, as yet, to be managed like a flock of sheep, who follow the bell-weather, as Cato complained of the Romans in his time.

But tho' I hope there is none amongst us, that has it in his power to ruin his country ; there are some, whose great abilities and elevated station, may enable them to do it the greatest service. And if they who have these qualifications, have also that bold virtue, which truth and justice should inspire, interest, inclination, or duty, will draw in others to assist them.

You, Sir, have not only these advantages, but also every other requisite, to entitle you to the appellation of a *great* and *leading* man. To qualify a person completely for this station, he must first have made a very considerable figure in the court ; for upon this eminence his parts shine : there he has gained knowledge and experience in affairs of state, and there he has had opportunities of making creatures and dependants. After this, he must be turned out, and in disgrace, which
often



often creates him an interest with many of the people; nothing being more frequent, than to see the Prince's cast favourites become the favourites of the vulgar; the discountenanced and weaker side being glad of all helps, especially to have a leader of importance. And lastly, he must be taken into favour again, and courted and caressed much more than formerly. These are circumstances that cannot fail to render a man significant, and give him weight with all sides, at least for a time, or till some considerable point is gained. And perhaps you are the only instance that can be produced in this or any other age, in whom so many things have concurred to make you necessary to the public.

But to render a person in your station truly serviceable, as well as to confirm his power; it must appear by all his actions that he takes more care to advance the common interest, than to build up his own fortune; that he is not over-greedy for himself; that he shews no endeavours to engross the Prince, or to confine the royal favour only to himself, his family, or creatures; that he does not so much consider who are his personal friends, as who best love, and can best serve the public; that he has a disinterested mind, clean hands, and an undaunted spirit, to pursue what is right, and avoid what is wrong; and that he desires to have power and interest, rather by his proper merits and endow-

ments, than from the station he is in. When all this becomes visible, both to those who wish him ill, and wish him well, he will quickly grow to have authority with the whole people, and by this means be more powerfully enabled to promote the service of his Prince.

You, Sir, have an opportunity now put into your hands of giving the most distinguishing marks of affection to your country, whereby you will procure the esteem of wise and honest men, and shew that you truly deserve those many favours which are already heaped upon you and your friends. Such a behaviour as is expected from you at this time, will raise your virtue to a pitch above the reach of envy and detraction, and confirm that character, which you have merited on former occasions, of being *a strenuous assertor of the Liberties of your country*. Your attachment to this principle cannot be more plainly manifested, than by espousing, with all your might, the cause of your injured fellow subjects, *That their Petitions be answered, and their Grievances redressed*.

If you have lately discovered any sentiments in this particular, contrary to the opinion of other patriots, and of all mankind, I doubt not but the declared voice of the people, in their humble addresses to the parliament from every part of the kingdom, has by this time determined your conduct, and that you'll hearken

hearken to the *general cry for Justice on those that have betrayed and undone us*. Persons, who possess eminent places in the commonwealth, are the servants of the commonwealth, and equally obliged in duty to comply with the unanimous bent of the subjects, as with the positive commands of their Sovereign: which can seldom clash, when the Prince has nothing at heart more than the welfare of his people.

Affairs are now approaching to a crisis, discontents rise high; and it greatly concerns his Majesty's interest, and the peace of the community, that those be given up to the general resentment, who are the objects of the general resentment. One of the bravest of our kings, Henry the fourth, removed from court four of his servants at once, for no other reason, but that they were so unfortunate, as not to be grateful to the people: and probably the vices of these four favourites were concealed from the King, tho' visible to others. If, therefore, so great a monarch judged it prudent not to oppose the inclinations of his subjects, in a point of smaller consequence; it will very ill become any private man to think of contending with the people, by obstructing justice on those who lie under the heavy weight of their accusation.

It is therefore, Sir, the more incumbent on you to acquit yourself impartially in the present affair; and the rather, because the generality

nerality are apprehensive of some extraordinary step, by the promotion of a genius like yours; which they fear may be able to protect great and mighty criminals from the indignation of their injured fellow subjects. The common clamour is against the late *Directors* of the *South Sea* Company, and those who acted under them: but are there not others *equally*, if not *more* guilty, that *directed* them throughout the whole scene of villainy, who seem, as it were, to outbrave the justice of their country, by supporting themselves in their stations, as if their conduct had been unquestionable?

There is not a truer symptom of a corrupted and depraved State, than to see persons continued in the possession of power, whose innocence is generally suspected. It shews that guilt has many favourers and protectors, than which there cannot be a more melancholy prospect. But on the other hand, 'tis a foolish and desperate thing for single persons, let their interest be ever so great, to think of facing so powerful an enemy as the whole people, by the strength and faction of their friends. An honest Man, and a good Patriot, will quit the stage of business, and retire, rather than involve the public in his troubles or misfortunes; for we are to suffer for our country, but our country is not to suffer for us: *Equidem pro Patria qui lætum*
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oppetissent sæpe fando audiui: qui Patriam pro se perire æquum censerent, hi primi inventi sunt.

They, who in order to their own security, take upon them to play this game, and who seem to have drawn in many to be concerned for them, will find at last, that instead of real friends, they have made two sorts of enemies; those whom they have provoked, and those whom they have deluded; and are in the event, sure to be made a sacrifice to public necessity.

I would recommend to men of rank and figure, if such there are, who may have incurred the displeasure of their country, the resigned and submissive behaviour of a certain great man not long since; who, tho' he was brought upon the stage and acquitted, nevertheless quitted his post, judging it not very decent for a person once struck at, to intermeddle in the affairs of Government.

There is also another reason alledged by many, not so favourable, which I need not mention to you, who are best acquainted with the truth.

Such a behaviour as that Great Man's, might perhaps, in some measure, contribute to abate the general resentment. But if this should not be thought the safest course by some, who cannot well defend their innocence; if they have any virtue left, they will rather chuse to decline their trial by a voluntary exile, and suffer in their own fame,
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ease and fortune, than make a step, which may tend to weaken the laws, and whereby the dignity and majesty of the commonwealth may be lessened and impaired. For, when the guilty endeavour to escape by power and interest, the laws are so far despised and trampled under, and a precedent is established for impunity; than which nothing can be of more dangerous consequence to the Public. When P. Scipio Africanus was charged by the Petilli for having suffered, through his neglect, the treasure of King Antiochus to be embezzled, he retired to Linternum (upon pretence of sickness) with a resolution not to stand his trial. Yet as to him such an accusation would have weighed little, put in the balance with all his brave exploits in Afric, Spain, and Asia: For tho' the administration was then severe, 'tis not unlikely, but that small failing would have been forgiven in so great a man. But he was not so puffed up with the marks of general love and popular affection, as to outdare the justice of his country, and was unwilling to give the constitution such a wound as his acquittal must have proved; the example of which would have hurt the State of Rome, more than banishment could hurt him; for it would have opened a gap, and authorized all the corruptions that followed.

It cannot surely surprize you to find the body of this nation so generally provoked, at
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the subtle arts and endeavours of these superior criminals, to stifle all evidence of their guilt. 'Tis this has put the people upon petitioning their Representatives, a method seldom practised by them, except in extraordinary cases. If every one, conscious of his own villainy, had fled from justice, as Mr. Knight has done (or was forced to do) we could not have hoped or expected to have Justice satisfied. But when every man of them is in our power, and confidently attending the issue of the proceedings of Parliament, it must needs fire every honest breast with indignation, to think that they have so long escaped the vengeance due to their crimes, through the default of legal evidence. And until by this, or some other means, satisfaction is done to a suffering people, it will be difficult to put a stop to their *universal cry for Justice*.

I do not yet hear that there are any, who dare now be bold enough openly to challenge or dispute the Right which the People have to Address their Sovereign, or their Representatives, on so extraordinary an occasion. But I know thus much has formerly been done; and that even since we had this privilege confirmed to us in the Claim of Right, at the Revolution; nay, there was a House of Commons in a late reign, which expressed their displeasure and resentment against this practice, in one particular instance, in a very

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singular and remarkable manner. When the Gentlemen, Freeholders, and Justices of the Peace, of the county of Kent, humbly petitioned that honourable House, to go upon the supplies, for enabling King William to carry on the war against France, the time having been far spent, and the season approaching for opening the campaign, the Petition was voted *scandalous, insolent, and seditious, tending to destroy the Constitution of Parliament, and to subvert the Established Government of this Realm*; and the persons who delivered it were not only taken into custody of a Serjeant at Arms, but afterwards committed to prison. I leave it to your judgment, and the general opinion at that time, what motives induced that House to act in such manner; but from thence some people assumed a license to run down the practice of petitioning, as factious, unwarrantable, and destructive of the power and authority of Parliaments; and indeed there are never wanting, on all occasions, persons fit to be the tools of a party, who are ready to defend or impugn any point, as they receive instructions from their superiors.

I think therefore, it will not be improper, by way of anticipation, to stop the mouths of designing men, especially since there are already many, who discourage such a procedure at this time; basely insinuating the ill tendency thereof towards inflaming the multitude,

titude, and consequently begetting a Civil War.

This, no doubt, was the opinion of that grave and judicious Alderman, who singly voted against the late Petition of the City, alledging, that *it was like erecting a Beacon to alarm the Nation, and set all in a Flame.* But he might, with more propriety, have spoke thus, If the City and County of Gloucester had not, by their earlier Petition, given a worthy precedent to this great metropolis and the whole kingdom, whereby they have purchased to themselves an immortal honour.

It seems to me, that there cannot be a more scandalous reflection on the present Parliament, than to suggest distrustful consequences of the Application of the People to their Representatives, in a reasonable and good cause: for it would be, in effect, to involve the Parliament in guilt; which no man will dare to think, and far less to utter. Or can it be imagined, that in the most glorious Age of Liberty, it will be reckoned a crime in the People to declare their just Complaints; and to approach those by Petition, who know their Grievances, and are able to redress them? The Right of Petitioning, is a privilege which mankind could never part with; and therefore it has been indulged them in the most arbitrary governments. Julius Cæsar freely permitted it,

when his will was a law to the people of Rome. And his successors, some of them more tyrannical than he, granted the same liberty, so long as the *Lex Regia* prevailed, *Rescribere Principi, to Petition their Emperors*, was one of the last privileges that People enjoyed. What a stain therefore would they bring on the memory of King George's reign, who insinuate any displeasure it might give his Majesty, or his Government, to exert a privilege which the Romans were not denied under a State of Tyranny? *The Government is good*, though the Times are bad. Our King and Parliament are as much disposed as we can possibly desire, to hearken to the *Petitions of the People*, or even to prevent them: and the people, who are ever quiet under a right administration, know their duty, and will not be tumultuous or unreasonable in their complaints; so that those are either very shallow, or very wicked, who surmise any danger, or inconvenience to the kingdom, from the multitude of petitions,

'Tis the interest, as well as the inclination, of the people to live in peace, and enjoy their own labour; at least this may be said of Great Britain, for we have seldom had open breaches and divisions, but they proceeded from some fatal error or weakness in those who ruled; which will evidently appear to any, who take a view of the
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several reigns, from the Norman invasion downwards. But there is no precedent in our history, where the body of the people ever contended with their own Representatives, and the King at their head. It is a thing too monstrous to suppose; and if ever it should happen (which God forbid) one may easily conjecture on which side the fault would lie.

When the subjects are aggrieved, injured, or oppressed, they know their first remedy, and seldom or never have proceeded to violent methods, without having petitioned their governors for redress in an humble manner. But when this has proved ineffectual, they have convinced their Sovereigns to their cost, how unreasonable a thing it is to be *Deaf to the Voice of the People*. And we have had both good and bad Kings, who by their practice have owned thus much; the one fort voluntarily, and the other by compulsion, opening their ears to the complaints of their Subjects.

Such Petitions were frequent in the reigns of Edward II. and Edward III. And then even Ireland was allowed to represent its grievances, and petition for a Parliament.

Bishop Burnet, in his history of the *Reformation*, informs us, that Henry VIII. told his subjects, when in arms against him in Yorkshire,

shire, that they ought not to have rebelled, but to have applied themselves to him by Petition.

King James I. declared himself in this point very fully in several proclamations. He begins one, which was published in the 11th year of his reign, in this remarkable manner; *The Complaint lately exhibited by certain Noblemen and others, of our Kingdom of Ireland, suggesting Disorders and Abuses, as well in the Proceedings of the late begun Parliament, as in the Martial and Civil Government of the Kingdom, we did receive with all extraordinary Grace and Favour. And by another proclamation he declares, That it was the Right of his Subjects to make their immediate Addresses to him by Petition. And in another he tells the people, That his own, and the Ears of his Privy Council, did still continue open to the just Complaints of his People.*

And King Charles I. by his declaration in 1644, declared his *Royal Will and Pleasure, that all his loving Subjects, who had any just Cause to present, or complain of any Grievances, might freely address themselves, by their humble Petitions, to his sacred Majesty, who would graciously hear their Complaints.*

Nor is this condescension of our Kings to hearken to the grievances of their subjects, any thing more than what the law requires, for no people have a more ample claim to the
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Right of Petitioning, than the people of Great Britain. Lord chief justice Hobbard says, *Access to the Sovereign must not be shut up in case of the subjects distress.* And it was one of the crimes for which the Spencers were banished, and afterwards hanged, *that they hindered the King from receiving and answering Petitions from great men and others.* And one article against the lord Strafford was, *That he issued out a proclamation and warrant of restraint, to inhibit the King's subjects to come to the fountain, their Sovereign, to deliver their Complaints of Wrongs and Oppressions.* But there cannot be a more plain declaration of this right, than the statute of the 13th of Charles II. which nevertheless was made to restrain the free practice of it. And indeed, there never was any reign in which *petitioning* was so much discountenanced: nay, it was prohibited by proclamations, as *tending to sedition and rebellion.* Yet, Sir, you know very well, that the methods then taken, by procuring counter-addresses, which expressed an abhorrence of Petitioning, and by dissolving four parliaments successively (who did little business, except the first) for the regard they shewed to the *Voice of the people*, did rather heighten than abate the universal displeasure against the proceedings of those times. In that juncture the city of London gave an early proof of their zeal for the welfare of their country, by petitioning the
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King for the sitting of the parliament in 1679, *to try the offenders, and redress all the most important Grievances, no otherwise to be redressed.*

This was in the first of those Parliaments: and the Commons, in the fourth Parliament, *Resolved, ' That the thanks of this House ' be given to the city of London, for their ' manifest loyalty to the King, their care, ' charge, and vigilancy, for the preservation ' of his Majesty's person, and of the Protestant religion.'*

It will never be forgotten, with what vigour our Parliament did then maintain the *Right of the People to Petition.* Their several *Resolutions* on this head, are so many standing monuments of their everlasting fame. On the 20th of October, 1680, the Commons *Resolved, nemine contradicente, That it is, and ever hath been, the undoubted Right of the Subjects of England, to petition the King for the calling and sitting of Parliaments, and redressing Grievances. Resolved, That to traduce such Petitioning as a violation of Duty; and to represent it to his Majesty as tumultuous and seditious, is to betray the Liberty of the Subject, and contributes to the design of subverting the ancient legal Constitution of this Kingdom, and introducing arbitrary Power.*

Ordered, *That a committee be appointed to enquire of all such persons as have offended against these Rights of the Subjects.* And Sir Francis Wythens being found guilty in this
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particular, they voted him a *Betrayer of the undoubted Rights of the Subjects of England*: and ordered that he should be expelled the House, and that he should receive his sentence upon his knees.

After this the city of London, having petitioned the House against Sir George Jefferys, their recorder, and it being referred to a committee, they passed the following vote. Resolved, *That this committee is of opinion, that by the evidence given to this committee, it does appear that Sir George Jefferys, recorder of the city of London, by traducing and obstructing Petitioning for the sitting of this Parliament, hath betrayed the Rights of the Subject.* To which the House agreed, and it was ordered, *That an humble Address be made to his Majesty, to remove him out of all public offices.* They farther ordered, That the committee should enquire of all such persons as had been advising or promoting of the proclamation, stiled a *Proclamation against tumultuous Petitioning.* And the grand juries of the counties of Somerset and Devon, having expressed their detestation of such Petitioning, the House ordered, that the two foremen of the said juries, and two others, should be sent for into custody of the Serjeant at Arms, to answer for breach of privilege (as they called the Abhorrence of Petitioning) by them committed against the House. They

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also voted, that one Thomas Herbert, Esq; should be sent for in custody, for prosecuting John Arnold, Esq; at the Council table, for *promoting a Petition, and procuring Subscriptions.* To them they added two others upon the same account, whom they called *Betrayers of the Liberties of the Subject.* - And lastly, they ordered an impeachment against Sir Francis North, chief justice of the Common Pleas; Sir William Scroggs, chief justice of the King's Bench; Sir Thomas Jones, one of the justices of the same Bench; and Sir Richard Weston, one of the barons of the Exchequer; *for advising Proclamations against Petitioning.*

Thus, Sir, I have laid before you the sense of an English House of Commons, with respect to this Right of Petitioning. Their behaviour in asserting it, will be as thankfully remembered by all posterity, as it is worthy to be imitated on every the like occasion, by their successors in the same trust and honour. And if they had been suffered to sit, to do this nation the service they intended, the Petitions of the People would have been complied with, and the Betrayers of their Country given up to their resentment. In which case, we should not have had a Popish successor, nor known the calamities we have since undergone on that account. But such are the fatal consequences

quences of *disregarding the Voice of the People.*

Sir, the People of Great Britain will not be disregarded. Experience tells us, that it is not safe to provoke them, who know their own Privileges so well, and how to assert the same. King John was obliged by Force to redress the Grievances of the nation, when the milder methods of petitioning and remonstrating proved ineffectual; and also to confirm by his great charter, the Liberty of the People, to even compel him for the future, in cases of the like necessity, *by seizing his Castles, Lands, and Revenues, and by pursuing those to utter Destruction, that should take up Arms for him.* And when he afterwards broke his oath and promise, the Barons said, *What shall we do with this wicked King? If we let him alone, he will destroy us and our People; it is expedient therefore, that he be expelled the Throne, we will not have him any longer to reign over us:* And accordingly, in a general Assembly, with the Approbation of all the Realm, they adjudged him *unworthy to be a King.* To this effect we find, according to the custom of those times, a long rhyme in the Chronicle of Mailros, deploring the infelicity of that affair, *That the Body should attempt to rule the Head, and the People to be above their King;* but adding,

*that there was a great and manifold Necessity
that it should be so.*

*Ordinem præposterum Anglia sancivit,
Mirum dictu dicitur tale quis audivit ?
Nam præesse Capiti Corpus concupivit ;
Regem suum regere Populus quæsit.
Causa tamen multiplex illud exigebat, &c.*

'Tis this consideration of the Power of the People, which makes an honest House of Commons terrible to *potent Offenders*, who are very well assured, that they will always be seconded by the irresistible power and inclination of the People. And of this the ministers of King Charles II. were highly sensible, when they ventured upon the most dangerous courses, *Prorogations and Dissolutions of Parliaments*, by which alone they could defend themselves from the effect of their resentment. Such an expedient, however, will never be attempted, but in weak and wicked reigns. Some of our Kings have chose rather to sacrifice their dearest favourites, than to run the hazard of their own ruin, by so desperate a proceeding. Henry III. who exasperated the Nobility and People, by keeping evil counsellors about his person, and being obstinately bent to protect them, found it his interest at last, to come to his Parliament, and to consent to their requests,

requests, by removing the Bishop of Winton, and banishing Peter de Rivalis, his two beloved favourites. Nay, the Parliament sent him a message, that if he would not do this, *They all, by the Common Council of the whole Kingdom, would expel him with his evil Counsellors out of the Kingdom, and consult about the Creation of a new King.* And you know, Sir, that King Charles I. was obliged to devote his chief minister, the Earl of Strafford, to destruction, by consenting to the Act of Attainder against him. The mention of which Great Man puts me in mind of another, for whom you, Sir, have no small kindness, who has thought fit to imitate him in this particular, of making an opposition to the court in the H——e of C——ns, the road to preferment. He indeed was the first that ever did so, and from an eminent patriot became the chief assertor of despotic power: but whoever is resolved to follow his steps, let him withal remember his fate.

All ages give us instances of Princes, betrayed by the craft and falshood of ill Ministers, when they have once gained credit to have their bold advice, given behind the curtain, put in execution, contrary to the interests of the People. We find that King Edward the Second, *for following evil Counsel, and refusing to hearken to the Voice of the People,* was by *Advice and Consent of all the*
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Prelates, Earls and Barons, and of the whole Community of the Kingdom, deposed from the Government.

We have another remarkable instance in Richard II. to whom his Parliament sent messages, to declare to him among other things, *That they found in an ancient Statute, and it had been done in fact not long before, that if the King, through any evil Counsel, or foolish Contumacy, or out of Scorn, or some petulant Wilfulness, or any other irregular Way, shall alienate himself from his People, &c. that then it shall be lawful for them, to depose that same King from his Royal Throne.*

King James II. is the latest example, who opposed the Voice of the People, by adhering to the counsels and intrigues of wicked men, and thereby lost his kingdoms. He would not receive the complaints of his subjects, but imprisoned the Bishops for humbly petitioning. When their Grievances were become intolerable, the People invited a force to compel him to redress them. And one of the principal motives, which inclined the Prince of Orange to assist them, was to traverse the wicked advice and counsel of the Ministers of that and the former reign, as appears by his declaration from the Hague, the 10th of October, 1688, which says, *That those evil Counsellors that had then Credit with King James, had overturned the Laws, Liberties*

Liberties and Religion of the Realm, and subjected all Things to an arbitrary Power; and he enumerates the villainous advice and practice they were guilty of, particularly, That they procured the Parliament to be dissolved, when they could not prevail with the Members to comply with their wicked Designs. Therefore the declaration adds, That the Prince came over with a Force sufficient to defend himself from the Violence of those evil Counsellors. This declaration was seconded by the resolutions of the States General, the 28th of the same month, who thereby declared, they assisted the Prince of Orange, because King James, by ill Counsel, and guided by his Ministers, attempted to subvert the Fundamental Laws and Religion of the Nation, &c. The Lords and Commons in the convention, were also of the same opinion with the Prince and States, and therefore in their declaration of their Rights and Privileges, presented to King William and Queen Mary, the 13th of February following, They declared, That King James, by the Assistance of evil Counsellors and Ministers employed by him, did endeavour to subvert the Protestant Religion, and the Laws and Liberties of the Kingdom.

You see, Sir, it is manifest, from the foregoing examples (and I could mention many more if it were necessary) how dangerous a
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thing it is for bad Princes, and their evil projecting Ministers, to slight the Complaints of the People. As for *Parliaments*, I must confess, that there can hardly an instance be given of one, before the age we live in, which greatly disobliged the People : nor would ever any since have merited their displeasure, if the artifices of the Court, in some of the late reigns, had not bias'd and restrained them from their duty to their country. Parliaments were always reckoned the proper Guardians of Liberty and the Laws, and a necessary fence against the arbitrary power of Princes. For which reason, they have ever been uneasy to such as had a mind to contend with the People about their Rights. The Ministry of King James I. made him afraid of Parliaments, as an eclipse of his power ; so that he was always glad to be rid of them, before the necessary business of the kingdom was done. Under King Charles I. they proceeded farther to question their authority, and controul their proceedings, and to toss them up and down by sudden adjournments, prorogations and dissolutions, till at last it was resolved to have no more Parliaments, and to forbid the People to make mention of them ; the consequence of which destructive counsels, fell heavy on the authors, and were such as I dread and abhor to remember. But they took different measures in the following reign.

reign, to subvert our constitution, as to Parliaments: for, having found by experience, that a *Free Parliament* could not be awed, they resolved to attempt that by fraud, which was not to be compassed by force. And thus, you know, Sir, began the *damnable invented project of corrupting Parliaments*, which prospered so well at first, that the King thought fit to continue one near eighteen years. The same method has been taken in other succeeding reigns, to the almost undoing England; and indeed it is so sure a way to complete its ruin, that we may already wonder that we have so much as the name of a Free People left.

Nothing but a free and uncorrupt Parliament, can save the Nation at this time; a Parliament, which will grant the Petitions of the People, who unanimously pray for redress of public Grievances, and justice on public Offenders. And 'tis our only surviving comfort, that such a Parliament as the People want and wish for, is now sitting. As it is the duty, and has been the practice of such of our Kings, who have been faithful to the trust reposed in them by the People, and regardless of their own honour, to punish their Officers and Ministers for malversation; (witness King Alfred, who caused forty-four Judges to be hanged in one year, for illegal, false, and corrupt judgments) so it belongs to our Parliaments to redress the Grievances occasioned by the

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Executive Part of the Government, and other National Grievances, and to punish guilty Ministers and other great Offenders. Of this all ages give us precedents; and nothing has been so mischievous to the kingdom, as the Supineness of some late reigns, in not making so frequent and signal Examples among the Ministerial Dispensers of our Laws, and among the Officers of our Kings; as our ancestors used to do.

I hope you don't think, Sir, that I accuse any persons, who have a share in the present Administration; God forbid there should be any room to suspect them. Yet you must give me leave to say, that we have great and powerful offenders to deal with. But there is no man so great, that a British Parliament cannot reach; nor no art so deep, that they cannot discover. I have read of a country where there was a constant series of mismanagement for many years together, and yet no body was punished; when Offices were given in the nature of Bribes and Pensions, and constantly taken away upon non-compliance with the Court Measures; when by splitting of Places among several persons, which were formerly executed by one, or by reviving such as were sunk, or by creating others which were altogether useless or unnecessary, or by promises of Preferment to those who could not presently be provided for,

for, the Court had made above two hundred Members absolutely dependent upon them. But, blessed be God, we live in better times! we have a gracious King, who makes his interest the same with that of his People, and a Parliament the Guardians of the People's Liberties; who will let the whole World see that they are neither to be perverted by Places, or deceived by false Appearances; that they know how to honour and reverence his Majesty, and punish the Destroyers of their Country.

As for you, Sir, I am persuaded it must now be your opinion, that nothing at present could more contribute to undo us, than to be supine and indifferent, when the greatest Villainies have been committed, and to manage the Discovery with a cold Prosecution. But if you think there are so many engaged in the late Conspiracy against their Country, that it is advisable to connive, and not prosecute it any farther; I am sure, if it is so formidable, that it is dangerous to enquire farther into it, it is much more dangerous to let it alone.

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